

# SHORT STORIES : THE PUZZLE PIECES OF LIFE

**Grade Level:** Eighth Grade

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**Length of Unit:** Nine Lessons

## I. ABSTRACT

Distinguishing the elements of fiction in a short story is crucial to student recognition of these elements in any literary context. Once students understand these elements (plot, setting, theme, point of view, conflict, suspense, climax, characterization) by reading shorter selections focusing on these elements, they advance beyond that basic knowledge to be able to evaluate more critically how these elements mesh in the longer, more complex Core Knowledge selections. Students will also have the opportunity to enrich their vocabulary through exploration of Greek/Latin roots and to expand their cultural horizons through learning common foreign phrases. The short story unit will culminate with group collaboration in which students “construct” their own short story summary by interweaving one or more elements from the selections read. Students will long remember “The Dinner Party” in Dr. Heidegger’s study with the young girl stepping forward from “The Open Boat” in her ragged red sweater wishing on “The Monkey’s Paw” that she would never grow old.

## II. THE OVERVIEW

- A. Concept Objectives:(Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills: 8.12 F, G, H; 8.14 A)
1. Students will understand and appreciate how the elements of fiction contribute to the meaning of any story and apply that knowledge.
  2. Students will understand relationships between characters in a short story and be able to apply that knowledge to real-life experiences.
  3. Students will understand the meaning of plot and be able to summarize the plot of a given short story.
  4. Students will understand the relationships created through the choices of individuals and the results of those choices and apply that knowledge to real-life experiences.
- B. Content covered by the *Core Knowledge Sequence*:
1. Vocabulary (p. 184-185)
  2. Short Stories (p.184)
  3. Elements of Fiction (184)
  4. Foreign Phrases Commonly Used in English (p.185)
- C. Skills:(Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills: 8.7 A-D; 8.9 B; 8.10 A, B, D, E, F, G, H, I, K)
1. Students will identify the elements of fiction that contribute as a whole to the creation of a short story.
  2. Students will identify how the point of view affects the story and the reader.
  3. Students will recognize and identify conflicts and relationships within a story and real life.
  4. Students will recognize and summarize plot in a story.
  5. Students will determine setting in a story.
  6. Students will predict the outcome of a given story.
  7. Students will recognize the author’s ability to create suspense.

8. Students will identify cause and effect relationships within a story.
9. Students will create alternate versions of a given story by changing the point of view in which it is told.
10. Students will explain the theme of a given story.
11. Students will identify the elements of fiction that contribute to theme.
12. Students will identify the difference between internal and external conflict and be able to find examples of each within the context of a short story.

### III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

- A. For teachers:
  1. <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/tsehov.htm> Information on Anton Chekov
  2. <http://www.flo.tec.sc.us/online-collegeweb/courses/eng102/hawthorn.htm>
  3. Information on Nathaniel Hawthorne.
  4. Scott Foresman, *Explorations in Literature* 8<sup>th</sup> grade edition.
- B. For students:
  1. Prior knowledge of literary styles and techniques from poetry unit, writing from previous units, elements of fiction from 7<sup>th</sup> grade Core Knowledge.

### IV. RESOURCES:

- A. Copies of: “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment,” by Nathaniel Hawthorne; “The Bet,” by Anton Chekov; “God Sees the Truth But Waits,” by Leo Tolstoy; “An Honest Thief,” by Fyodor Dostoyevsky; “The Open Boat,” by Stephen Crane; “A Christmas Wish,” by Betty Smith; “The Dinner Party,” by Mona Gardner; “The Monkey’s Paw,” by W. W. Jacobs; “Eleven,” by Sandra Cisneros
- B. Journals as introductory activities for each class day (Appendix A)
- C. A Conflict Chart (to make copies for students) (Appendix B)
- D. A Short Story Chart (to make copies for students) (Appendix C)
- E. Definitions of the Elements of Fiction (copied for students) (Appendix D)
- F. Overhead projector, transparencies, transparency markers
- G. Butcher paper (amounts specified in lessons), markers

### V. LESSONS

#### Lesson One: Conflict and relationships – “A Christmas Wish”(see bibliography)

- A. *Daily Objectives*
  1. Concept Objectives
    - a. Students will understand relationships between characters in a short story and be able to apply that knowledge to real life experiences.
  2. Lesson Content
    - a. Greek/Latin root words – culpa, occido, pugno
    - b. Elements of Fiction – conflict (internal and external)
    - c. Literature – “A Christmas Wish”
  3. Skill Objective:
    1. Students will identify the difference between internal and external conflict and be able to find examples of each within the context of a short story.
- B. *Materials*
  1. Conflict Chart (Appendix B) for each student
  2. “A Christmas Wish” for each student

3. "The Dinner Party" for each student
  4. Overhead projector, Conflict Chart, transparency, transparency marker
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. relationship- a connection between two things or people (family, romantic, professional, friend – student definitions)
  2. conflict - a struggle between two opposing forces
  3. internal conflict – a struggle within oneself
  4. external conflict – a struggle between two or more people or things
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. When students come to class each day the journal information (Appendix A) should be written on the front board.
  2. Give students three to five minutes to copy and respond in writing to the journal entry for that day. Begin class discussion of the journal entry. Discuss the Greek and Latin root words and have students come up with other possible words from these roots.
  3. Students individually brainstorm/write definitions for that word. Lead discussion of student responses. Arrive at a class consensus as to what the term most likely means.
  4. Extend discussion of the term to include the probability that problems and conflicts occur quickly within any relationship. Have students think of possible examples.
  5. Have students then define the word "conflict." Discuss the different conflicts – internal and external – and have students define these terms as well.
  6. We are now ready to begin reading the story "A Christmas Wish" with the idea of conflict in mind. Distribute the story and the Conflict Chart.
  7. Have students take turns reading aloud. Students discuss conflicts found in the story. Fill in the chart on the transparency as students fill in their own charts.
  8. Discuss the relationships in the story and list those on the chart as well.
  9. Distribute copies of "The Dinner Party" for homework reading. Tell students to look for conflicts in the story and be ready to contribute examples tomorrow.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Use class discussion and completion of the Conflict Chart to assess student ability to recognize internal and external conflict. Tomorrow's discussion of "TDP" will reinforce the importance of conflict in literature and in life.

### **Lesson Two: Plot –"The Dinner Party"**

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objectives
    - a. Students will Understand the meaning of plot and be able to summarize the plot of a given short story.
  2. Lesson Content
    - a. Foreign phrases – piece de resistance, bete noire, coup de grade
    - b. Element of fiction – plot
    - c. Literature "The Dinner Party" (see bibliography)
  3. Skill Objective
    - a. Students will identify conflicts and relationships within a story.

- B. *Materials*
1. Short Story Chart (Appendix C) for each student
  2. Elements of Fiction (Appendix D) for each student
  3. Overhead projector, Short Story Chart, transparency, transparency marker
- C. *Key Vocabulary: Elements of Fiction*
1. plot – the series of events in a story
  2. setting – where and when a story takes place
  3. characters – the people involved in the events of the story
  4. point of view – the relationship of the narrator to the characters in the story
  5. theme – the main idea of the story, often a moral or lesson
  6. conflict – a struggle between two opposing forces
  7. suspense – the methods an author uses to keep the reader’s interest
- D. *Procedure/Activities*
1. Students copy and respond to today’s journal entry. Discussion follows. Also, discuss today’s journal entry.
  2. After a review of yesterday’s discussion of relationships, establish the fact that conflict is a part of all relationships in real life as well as in literature. This discussion will help students understand the short story fictional elements.
  3. Distribute the Elements of Fiction (Appendix D) for students to keep in their class folders for future reference. Students can also be responsible for their own materials.
  4. Review conflict in “A Christmas Wish” before discussion of “The Dinner Party.”
  5. Distribute the Short Story Chart (Appendix C) and explain that students will be using this chart to identify the elements of fiction within each short story.
  6. Have students begin filling out the chart for “The Dinner Party,” specifically discussing the conflict and suspense sections of the chart. Other sections of the chart could also be discussed although they are not yet the focus.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Assess student understanding of plot by sequencing events of a story.

**Lesson Three: Plot revisited, suspense, predicting outcomes –“The Dinner Party”**

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objectives
    - a. Students will understand the meaning of plot and be able to summarize the plot of a given short story.
  2. Lesson Content
    - a. Greek/Latin roots – pathos, nego, positum, via
    - b. Element of fiction – suspense
    - c. Literature – “The Dinner Party” (see bibliography)
  3. Skill Objectives
    - a. Students will recognize and identify the author’s ability to create suspense.
    - b. Students will predict the outcome of a given story.
- B. *Materials*
1. Butcher paper for each class (approximately 3’ by 5’)

2. Markers
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
  1. suspense – the methods an author uses to keep the reader’s interest
  2. outcome – the end result – how the author gets there
- D. *Procedures/Activities:*
  1. Students copy and respond to the daily journal entry. Class discussion follows.
  2. Discuss the Greek/Latin roots. Have students think of other words that contain the roots.
  3. Discuss the term suspense. What does that term mean? How does an author build suspense into a work of literature? Why are certain movies more suspenseful than other movies? What events in a story lead to the ending of that story? How good are you at predicting the outcome of a story based on certain events?
  4. Divide the class into groups. Students will find evidence of suspense that supports the ends of “ACW” and “TDP.”
  5. Students will share their findings when finished. Draw a line down the middle of the butcher paper (taped to the chalkboard or wall). Write the title of the first story at the top of the left column and the title of the second story at the top of the right column. When finished students will share their evidence of the appropriate story by completing the chart on the butcher paper.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
  1. Assess student understanding of short story terminology through completion of the above activity.
  2. A quiz over short story terms is also a possibility.

**Lesson Four: Predicting outcomes, suspense, and setting – “The Monkey’s Paw”**

- A. *Daily Objectives:*
  1. Concept Objective
    - a. Students will understand and appreciate how the elements of fiction contribute to the meaning of any story.
  2. Lesson Content
    - a. Foreign phrases – savoir faire, raison d’être
    - b. Literature – “The Monkey’s Paw” (see bibliography)
  3. Skill Objective
    - a. Students will predict the outcome of a given story.
- B. *Materials:*
  1. class set of “The Monkey’s Paw”
- C. *Key Vocabulary:*
  1. evidence – proof
- D. *Procedures/Activities:*
  1. Students copy, respond to, and discuss today’s journal entry. Discuss the foreign phrases.
  2. Have students fold a sheet of paper in half from top to bottom and then from right to left, resulting in 4 squares.
  3. Label the squares setting, events, dialogue, and predicted outcome.
  4. Read the story aloud, stopping when Mr. White wishes for 200 lbs
  5. Students then brainstorm possible results of this wish, looking back at what they have read to find evidence that supports their predictions. Dialogue, actual events, and setting description from the story are filled

in the appropriate square. From these parts of the story, students predict a possible outcome, then filling in that square. Teacher/students may want to create one possible ending so that everyone understands the process before the students work individually or with a partner.

*E. Evaluation/Assessment*

1. The 4-square chart will be the assessment for this lesson.

**Lesson Five: Cause/effect and suspense – “The Monkey’s Paw”**

*A. Daily Objectives*

1. Concept Objective
  - a. Students will understand the relationships and results created through individual choices and apply that knowledge to life experiences.
2. Lesson Content
  - a. Greek/Latin roots – anthropos, aequus, fido, morior
  - b. Literature – “The Monkey’s Paw” (see bibliography)
3. Skill Objective
  - a. Students will identify cause and effect relationships within a story.

*B. Materials*

1. “The Monkey’s Paw”
2. Short Story Chart for each student
3. Butcher paper (approximately 3’ x 5’) for each class; markers

*C. Key Vocabulary*

1. Cause and effect – the relationship and consequences between events in which one event causes the second to occur, etc.

*D. Procedures/Activities*

1. Students copy, respond to, and discuss daily journal entry. Discuss the Greek/Latin roots and think of other possible words made from those root words.
2. Discuss/review outcomes from yesterday’s class. Share student samples of possible endings.
3. Ask the class which is more likely to occur, negative or positive results, from this story. (negative)
4. Read the rest of the story aloud.
5. Draw a “T” on the butcher paper (taped to the board) and write some of the endings to the story on the left side. Have students come up with the evidence and write that on the right side. Ask students to think of possible cause/effect relationships based on the information in the two columns.
6. Distribute the Short Story Chart (Appendix C). Students may work in groups to complete the chart for the story. Remember that some students may be keeping their own materials for this unit.

*E. Evaluation/Assessment:*

1. Student-created outcomes and cause/effect chart.

**Lesson Six: Point of view – “Eleven”**

*A. Daily Objectives*

1. Concepts Objective
  - a. Students will understand and appreciate how the elements of fiction contribute to the meaning of any story.

2. Lesson Content
    - a. Greek/Latin roots – solus, phobos, credo
    - b. Element of fiction – point of view
    - c. Literature – “Eleven” (see bibliography)
  3. Skill Objective:
    - a. Students will identify how point affects the story and the reader.
    - b. Students will rewrite “Eleven” from a different point of view.
- B. Materials*
1. “Eleven” for each student.
  2. Short Story Chart for each student.
- C. Key Vocabulary:*
1. Point of view – the relationship of the narrator to the characters in the story, as well as how the reader relates to the story
- D. Procedures/Activities*
1. Students copy, respond to, and discuss daily journal entry. Discuss the Greek/Latin roots and think of other possible words made from those root words. Have students share experiences in which they feel they were unfairly judged. Ask them how differently that experience might sound if told by someone else involved.
  2. Distribute copies of the story and chart (Appendix C). Have students fill in the chart as they read the story aloud.
  3. Discuss the importance of the events being told from Rachel’s point of view. How differently would the same situation “sound” if told from another character’s point of view?
  4. Pair students to rewrite the story from another point of view. They may choose any one of the other characters in the story, an uninvolved student, or the sweater to retell the story. Students will share their version of the story.
  5. Students may also rewrite “Eleven” individually from another point of view as an out-of-class assignment (3/4 page to one page). Students love this assignment.
- E. Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Evaluate the re-written stories to determine if students successfully comprehend the importance of point of view.

**Lesson Seven: Theme – “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment”**

- A. Daily Objectives:*
1. Concept Objective
    - a. Students will understand and appreciate how all the elements of fiction work together to contribute to the meaning of any story.
  2. Lesson Content
    - a. Greek/Latin roots – possum, sophos, spiritus
    - b. Element of fiction – theme
    - c. Literature – “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment”
  3. Skill Objective
    - a. Students will identify and explain the theme of a given story.
- B. Material*
1. Class set of “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment”
- C. Key Vocabulary*
1. Theme – the main idea of a story; the lesson or moral.

- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. Students copy, respond to, and discuss daily journal topic. Discuss the Greek/Latin roots and other possible words.
  2. Distribute “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment”
  3. As students read the story aloud, the teacher focuses on certain events that contribute to the theme of the story. Stop reading and discuss certain points where the theme is foreshadowed.
  4. Ask students what they think the theme might be. Discuss answers for this story.
  5. Review possible themes of other stories for reinforcement.
- F. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Review possible themes of other stories.
  2. A quiz covering themes for each story is also an option.

### **Lesson Eight: Show What You Know – Group Stories**

- A. *Daily Objective*
1. Concept Objective
    - a. Students will understand and appreciate how the elements of fiction contribute to the meaning of any story.
  2. Lesson Content
    - a. Foreign phrases – faux pas, enfant terrible, avant garde
    - b. Element of fiction – all
    - c. Short stories: “The Bet,” “An Honest Thief,” “God Sees the Truth But Waits,” “The Open Boat”
  3. Skill Objective
    - a. The students will identify individual elements of a story.
- B. *Materials*
1. Copies of the remaining Core short stories and Short Story Chart for each student.
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. All vocabulary presented in unit.
- D. *Procedures/Activities:*
1. Students copy, respond to, and discuss daily journal entry. Discuss foreign phrases.
  2. Assign students to a group. The teacher can decide how many students per group, how to set up the groups, and how to assign group responsibilities. Each group will be assigned the reading of one of the remaining Core stories. Each member of a group will be responsible for identifying one or more elements from that story.
  3. Members take turns reading the story. When any element is recognized, a member can alert the rest of the group. The person responsible for that element will then add that information to his or her notes. Through group collaboration each member’s short story chart will be completed.
  4. After all groups have read their stories and filled in their charts, each group presents its short story to the class. Students may use transparencies, butcher paper, etc., as a mean of sharing that story with the class. Students will begin each presentation with a short summary of the story.

- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Assess overall class understanding of the elements of fiction through student-led presentations. A rubric could be designed for this assessment.

### **Lesson Nine: Putting It All Together**

- A. *Daily Objectives:*
1. Concept Objective
    - a. Students will understand and appreciate how the elements of fiction contribute to the meaning of any story.
  2. Lesson Content  
all elements of fiction
  3. Skill Objective
    - a. Create a summary sentence from a group-constructed model that interweaves chosen elements from the short story unit selections.
    - b. Apply chosen elements of fiction to the creation of an original work if time permits.
- B. *Materials:*
1. Copies of all short stories for reference.
  2. Craft materials: glue, scissors, poster board, construction paper, cardboard, markers, magazines.
  3. Each student will bring 10 random craft items from home (paper clips, cotton balls, buttons, macaroni, pipe cleaners, etc.)
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. All vocabulary presented in unit.
- D. *Procedures/Activities:*
1. Students copy journal. Discuss Greek/Latin roots and think of new words.
  2. Students are placed in a group and given project guidelines.
  3. Using and/all items brought by your group members in addition to ALL items in the brown bag, students choose at least four elements from three or more short stories to “create” a group summary sentence that interweaves what they most remember. For example, the setting is Dr. Heidegger’s study where a dinner party is being given for Rachel (“Eleven”). Guests (characters) could be Francie, Neely, (“A Christmas Wish”), a lawyer and a banker (“The Bet”), a captain (“The Open Boat”), the colonel and the American naturalist (“The Dinner Party”), and Herbert (“The Monkey’s Paw”). Suspense could occur, as guests seem to notice movement in the portrait of Dr. Heidegger’s love. It appears that the monkey’s paw she holds in her hand is moving. Herbert wishes for his own Christmas tree decorated with red sweaters while the captain wishes (conflict) the cobra crawling across his feet would go away. After students have actually constructed the above elements using the craft items, they will write a summary sentence. An example sentence would be: Guests at Rachel’s dinner party will always remember the cobra tree topper illuminating the exquisite red-sweater tree. Students will present their model to the rest of the class.
  4. Students can also write their own original short story.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Students’ summary sentences.
  2. Students’ short stories (if assigned).

## VII. HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS

Appendix A - Journal Entries (to be used each day to start class)  
Appendix B - Conflict Chart  
Appendix C - Short Story Chart  
Appendix D - Elements of Fiction

## VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Web Sites

<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/tsehov.htm> (Provides information on Anton Chekov)

[http://www.flo.tec.sc.us/online\\_college\\_seb/courses/eng102/hawthorn.htm](http://www.flo.tec.sc.us/online_college_seb/courses/eng102/hawthorn.htm) (Hawthorne)

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*Short Stories.* Chekhov, Anton. "The Bet." Ed. By Schweikert, Harcourt Brace, and World. New York: 1925.

Sis, Jean. *Three Masters of Russian Fiction.* Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, Inc. New York: 1970. ISBN 0-15-335402-X

Smith, Betty. *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn.* "A Christmas Wish". Harper and Row. New York: 1943.

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## Appendix A: Short Stories: The Puzzle Pieces of Life

### Journals for Short Story Lessons

#### Lesson One

#### “A Christmas Wish”

##### Greek/Latin Roots:

1. culpa [L] to blame- culpable, culprit
2. occido [L] kill – homicide, suicide
3. pugno [L] fight – impugn, pugnacious

**Journal Entry: (Think about)** What is a relationship? Are there different kinds of relationships? **(Respond in Writing)** Discuss an important relationship in your life?

#### Lesson Two

#### “The Dinner Party”

##### Foreign Phrases:

1. piece de resistance- the principal part of the meal, a showpiece item
2. bete noire- a person or thing especially dreaded and avoided [literally “black beast”]
3. coup de grace- a decisive finishing blow

**Journal Entry: (Think about)** Conflict – good or bad? Choose one side and respond in writing.

#### Lesson Three

#### “The Dinner Party”

##### Greek/Latin Roots

1. pathos [G] suffering, feeling – sympathy, apathy
2. nego [L] deny – negate, negotiate
3. positum [L] place – position, opposite
4. via [L] way- deviate, viaduct

**Journal Entry: (Respond in Writing)** Discuss a mealtime custom in your family.

#### Lesson Four

#### “The Monkey’s Paw”

##### Foreign Phrases

1. savior faire – the ability to say or do the right thing in any given situation, polishes sureness in society [ literally “to know how to do”]
2. raison d^etre – reason for being

**Journal Entry: (Options- Respond in Writing)** If you were granted three wishes, what would you wish for? **Or** How might a granted wish be delivered in a way you did not expect?

#### Lesson Five

#### “The Monkey’s Paw”

##### Greek/Latin Roots:

1. anthropos [G] man, human being- anthropology, misanthrope
2. aequus [L] equal- equal, equation
3. fido [L] belief, faith- confide, infidel
4. morior [L] die- mortal, morbid

**Journal Entry: (Respond in Writing)** Who or what might be affected by the granting of your wishes?

## Appendix A (continued)

### Lesson Six

### “Eleven”

#### Greek/Latin Roots:

1. solus [L] alone- solo, desolate
2. phobos [G] fear- phobia, claustrophobia
3. credo [L] believe- credible, incredulous

**Journal Entry: (Options-Respond in Writing)** What are the “red sweaters” of life? How do they fit into the scheme of things? Write a simile describing your own age.

### Lesson Seven

### “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment”

#### Foreign Phrases:

1. Madame, Mademoiselle, Monsieur- Mrs., Miss, Mr.
2. Merci- thank you
3. Au revoir- goodbye, until we see each other again

**Journal Entry: (Respond in Writing)** If you had a wish that would help mankind, what would it be?

### Lesson Eight

### Group Stories- Show What You Know

#### Greek/Latin Roots:

1. possum [L] be able- possible, potent
2. sophos [G] wise- philosophy, sophomore
3. spiritus [L] breath- inspire, spirit

**Journal Entry: (Respond in Writing)** Discuss one of the elements of fiction found in your favorite movie.

### Lesson Nine

### Putting It All Together

#### Foreign Phrases:

1. faux pas- a social blunder [literally “false step”]
2. enfant terrible- one whose remarks or actions cause embarrassment, or someone strikingly unconventional [literally “terrible child”]
3. avant garde- a group developing new or experimental concepts, a vanguard

**Journal Entry: (Respond in Writing)** Reflecting on the stories you have read, discuss the strongest use of a specific fictional element.

## Appendix B: Short Stories: The Puzzle Pieces of Life

### Three Types of Conflict

Title of Story \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

Internal Conflict	External Conflict	Relationships

## Appendix C: Short Stories: The Puzzle Pieces of Life

### Elements of a Short Story

**Title of Story** \_\_\_\_\_ **Author** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Element</b>	<b>Information</b>
<b>Conflict</b>	
<b>Plot</b>	
<b>Suspense</b>	
<b>Setting</b>	
<b>Point of View</b>	
<b>Theme</b>	
<b>Suspense/Climax</b>	

## **Appendix D: Short Stories: The Puzzle Pieces of Life**

### **Definitions of Elements of Fiction**

1. Characters: the people interacting within the story
2. Plot: a series of happenings in a literary work
3. Setting: where and when the story takes place
4. Conflict: a struggle between opposing forces
5. Internal Conflict: a struggle within one person
6. External Conflict: a struggle between two or more people or things
7. Point of View: the relationship of the narrator to the characters in the story
8. Suspense: the methods the author uses in order to keep the reader's interests
9. Theme: the main idea of a story, often a moral or a lesson